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Memorandum of Conversation

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DATE: March 26, 1962

3:00 p.m.

Soviet Mission
Geneva, Switzerland

SUBJECT: Germany and Berlin

Downgraded To: SECRET

EO 11652: XGDS 1220 4

Authorized By: H. G. ...

August 4, 1975

PARTICIPANTS: United States

The Secretary

Mr. Kohler

Mr. Akalovsky

USSR

Mr. Gromyko

Mr. Semenov

Mr. Sukhodrev

COPIES TO:

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Mr. Gromyko invited the Secretary to speak first, saying that it was an unwritten tradition in the Soviet Union to have the guest speak first.

The Secretary said he wished to make one or two preliminary comments. He said that we had not responded initially and immediately to the Soviet paper on access because it was our view that it contained a fatal defect, i.e., the link between access and withdrawal of Western forces from West Berlin. That link was also apparent in what Mr. Gromyko had said orally. The Secretary emphasized that any proposal contingent on the withdrawal of Western forces was impossible and misleading because of the importance we attached to the presence of Western forces in West Berlin. Referring to the US suggestion for an international access authority and to the Soviet suggestion for such an authority, the Secretary believed that it might be possible to explore this in order to see whether some solution could be found, but emphasized again the greatness of the problem created by the linkage.

The Secretary observed that this was an illustration of the fundamental problem in communications between our two governments. The Soviet proposals were obviously in conflict with the vital interests of the West. A series of communications and conversations both sides had had so far on these problems had made it obvious that there was no movement toward agreement. However, it was not in the interests of the two sides merely to say that no agreement was possible and let things develop toward a crisis. Therefore, the US had tried to list the points on which it believed agreement was possible, at least in

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general terms. If both sides agreed on general principles, they could proceed to discuss other problems.

The Secretary said that personally he did not believe that there were many points of difference; however, they were points involving vital interests and if they could be handled and managed, other problems would fall into place. In spite of the differences of emphasis and detail, the Secretary thought agreement should be possible on the questions of the status of West Berlin, boundaries, non-aggression, practical arrangements to reconcile access and what Mr. Gromyko called the sovereignty of GDR, and non-diffusion of nuclear weapons. He stressed, however, that the stumbling block was what we considered our vital interests.

Referring to the US paper on general principles, the Secretary said that it was not in direct response to the Soviet papers on principles and access, but was designed for a different purpose. While the Soviet paper on general principles restated Soviet proposals, we believed that account must be taken of the differences existing on the various problems and that we must see how to handle them. Thus our paper did not require withdrawal of Soviet proposals or acknowledgement by the USSR of our vital interests in any new form. On the other hand, our paper contained points on which both sides should be able to agree and which could serve as a basis for further discussions.

Mr. Gromyko then launched into a lengthy statement frequently referring to what appeared to be a talking paper. He started out by restating the Soviet Government's belief that the Soviet proposals for a German peace treaty and the creation of a free city of West Berlin on the basis of such a treaty were aimed at a detente and at an improvement in international relations, particularly those between the great powers. He asserted that the Soviet Government wished good relations with the United States, including friendship, and that the peoples of our two countries would be grateful to their leaders if they were to bring about such relations. He stated that the Soviet Union had rejected and still rejected any attempts to depict the Soviet insistence on a peace treaty and on the creation of a free city of West Berlin as pursuit by the USSR of some narrow aims. The Soviet Government also flatly rejected assertions that the USSR or the GDR wish to take hold of West Berlin. Mr. Gromyko observed that such aims were alien to Soviet policy. He then said that the Soviet Union was proceeding on the basis of the fact that there was an absolutely abnormal situation in Germany and West Berlin, due to the fact that seventeen years after World War II there was still no peace treaty and the occupation regime continued to exist in West Berlin as if nothing had happened since the war.

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The Soviet Government believed that this abnormal situation was in conflict with the best interests of peace in Europe and throughout the world and was in conflict with the interests of improving relations among states, including those between the US and the USSR. He contended that the Soviet Government had never signed and could not sign a commitment providing for a perpetuation of the occupation of Germany or West Berlin, whereas what the Western Powers now sought in West Berlin was tantamount to the occupation of that city for an indefinite period. He reiterated that the Soviet Government could not agree to any such thing. Seventeen years had passed since World War II and a line should be drawn under that war; the drawing of such a line should not be a mere formal act but should involve changes stemming from a peace treaty.

Mr. Gromyko asserted that the Soviet Government proceeded from the facts of the existing situation, where two sovereign and independent German states existed, and suggested that all states must take account of those basic facts in shaping their policy with regard to Germany and, to a large extent, with regard to Europe in general. The Soviet Union proceeded from this basic fact and the purpose of a peace treaty was to bring the situation in Germany and Berlin into accord with the present as distinct from the past.

Mr. Gromyko continued that it was most important now to have a German peace treaty and to resolve the status of West Berlin on the basis of such a treaty by agreement of all states concerned. As to the contents of such status, the Soviet Government had made proposals on the subject and they were well known. He said that he wished to emphasize the Soviet Government's preference for an agreed solution of the problem of a German peace treaty and of the status of West Berlin on the basis of such a treaty. He stressed that the USSR would sign a peace treaty unilaterally and take appropriate steps without agreement on the part of the Western Powers only if the latter refused to reach agreement. However, the USSR preferred an agreed solution and the search for such a solution was the purpose of the present negotiations.

Mr. Gromyko then stated that the questions of a German peace treaty and of a free city of West Berlin were closely related to the question of respect for the sovereignty of the GDR. He said that the USSR could not accept any agreement not providing for such respect. The Soviet Union could not agree to any arrangements which would be based on a situation where certain states would completely disregard the sovereignty of the GDR because of their feeling of animosity toward that state. He said that while many countries had a social order and policies which the USSR did not like, the Soviet Government respected their sovereignty in dealing with them, and whenever the Soviet

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Union had to resolve certain problems with those countries it did so on the basis of respect for their sovereignty. The GDR should not be an exception from that rule. The Secretary's statement that unrestricted access and transit of persons and goods could be reconciled with respect for the GDR's sovereignty represented a correct thesis. The Soviet Government held the same view and had said so in New York and to Ambassador Thompson in Moscow. However, the main problem was the content and the interpretation of this formula. He asserted that the Soviet Government feared there was an intention merely to pay lip service to the sovereignty of the GDR and to flout it in practice. If this was the case, it would be regrettable and it would not facilitate agreement.

Referring to the Soviet paper on transit, Mr. Gromyko claimed that it had been prepared in order to meet repeated US requests that the Soviet Union spell out its views with regard to the question of respect for the sovereignty of the GDR in connection with the transit of persons and goods. He contended that the paper set forth the detailed views of the Soviet Government on the subject of civilian transport, but the US pretended not to have noticed the paper and merely said that its main defect was the link to the Soviet proposals on the status of West Berlin. Although it was true that there was a Soviet proposal on the status, the US now had an opportunity of considering the problem of transit thoroughly and of replying to the Soviet views on transit as such. Of course, transit would be to such a West Berlin the status of which would have to be agreed. However, the Soviet Union had now stated its views on transit and on the question of how sovereignty and transit could be reconciled, as both sides had said that they could.

With reference to the question of the presence of Western forces in West Berlin, Mr. Gromyko said that the Soviet Government had proposed several variants of the solution of this problem, which were well known. He claimed that the Secretary's remarks indicated that the West regarded West Berlin only as a military springboard and a military base. The USSR was compelled to draw appropriate conclusions from this.

Mr. Gromyko then said that the Soviet Government had repeatedly stated its position with regard to the questions to be resolved in connection with a peace treaty, such as borders, non-transfer of nuclear weapons to and non-production of such weapons in the two Germanies, and non-aggression. That position was well known and there was no need to repeat it. The Soviet Union had tried to present its views on these matters in compressed form in the USSR working paper on general principles. Of course, that paper contained certain points which were not regarded favorably by the United States.

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However, the US paper also included certain points representing US unilateral positions and took no account of Soviet positions. Furthermore, the US paper even represented a backward step in certain areas.

Mr. Gromyko then reviewed the US paper paragraph by paragraph. With regard to paragraph 1, he said that the title "Berlin" appeared to reflect a desire to slip in the idea of one Berlin, something which was not negotiable. He said the United States itself had admitted that West Berlin was a separate entity and he contended that East Berlin was an organic part of the GDR. Referring to the phrase "for improving the situation" in subparagraph (b), he wondered what it meant. He suggested that it might mean an increase in the number of occupation troops or agreement on a perpetuation of the occupation. He asserted that the real question was that of eliminating the occupation and of removing the situation fraught with dangers and risks; the present situation yielded no good to anyone, including the United States, from the political, military, economic, or any other standpoint. With reference to subparagraph (c), he said it emphasized preservation of the present access procedures whereas the USSR proceeded on the basis of the need for respect for the sovereignty of the GDR and of reconciling the concept of the GDR sovereignty with free access. He said it would be intolerable if the sovereignty of the GDR was not respected. Mr. Gromyko asserted that there was no justification for the US apprehensions with regard to possible actions by the GDR in the event that the Soviet proposal was adopted, because if the USSR reached agreement with the US and its allies, it would consult its own allies, including the GDR, and the GDR would undertake appropriate obligations. Therefore, there was no ground for fears. He expressed the hope that the US would study the Soviet proposals on access, including access authority, and duly evaluate them. He reiterated the Soviet desire to reach agreement and said he wished to stress again that only if there were no agreement between the two sides would the West have to deal with the GDR. He reiterated that the US should now carefully study the consideration expressed by the USSR.

Referring to paragraph 2 of the US Draft Principles, Mr. Gromyko noted that subparagraphs (a) and (b) referred to German unification. He said the Soviet Government's view was that this was an internal matter for the Germans themselves to resolve by agreement between the GDR and the FRG and asserted that conclusion of a single peace treaty or of two separate peace treaties would facilitate a rapprochement between the two German states. He claimed that this paragraph was an illustration of the incorrectness of the US assertion that the paper set forth agreed views. The Soviet views on the question of German unification were known to the US, but the paper set forth the US' own views. With reference to subparagraph (c), Mr. Gromyko said that it

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was the Soviet view that any agreement with any part of Germany must be consistent with the understanding, including the results of the present negotiations, between the two sides on the questions relating to a German peace settlement, if such an understanding was reached. On the other hand, if there were no such understanding, then the USSR would have no alternative other than to act on the basis of a peace treaty with the GDR. However, that would be the case only in the event that there was no agreement between East and West.

Commenting on paragraph 3, Mr. Gromyko contended that it substituted the question of non-armament of the two German states with nuclear weapons and of non-production of such weapons in those states with the question of a much broader, international scope. Yet conversations both here in Geneva and in New York had dealt with this problem with specific reference to the two Germanies. Mr. Gromyko said that the USSR was not opposed to the idea of preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons on a global scale and noted that the Soviet vote for the respective UN general Assembly resolution, as well as the Soviet Government's communication on this question to the acting Secretary General of the United Nations, reflected that attitude. However, for reasons that were well known, it was important that one problem not be replaced with the other or made contingent upon its solution. Moreover, the formula in the US paper was unsatisfactory because it did not preclude such interpretation as would allow armament with nuclear weapons of such Bundeswehr and other non-nuclear nation forces as were formally not under the control of "national governments" but were considered as part of NATO forces. He stated that the language of this paragraph should not allow such interpretation. He noted, however, that the USSR would not object to the inclusion of such a broad formula in the principles, if they were agreed, provided that it contained the phrase "including the two German states." Furthermore, it must also be understood that the solution of the broad problem must not hold up the application of this principle to the two German states. Of course, if there were no delay with regard to the broad problem, there would be no difficulty. Mr. Gromyko then stated that the Soviet position was that nuclear weapons should not be transferred either directly, through third parties, or through military organizations; this should apply to both the universal formula and the formula restricted only to the two German states.

Turning to paragraph 4 of the US paper, Mr. Gromyko said that reference to non-use of force in sub-paragraph (a) was a minimum minimorum. On the other hand, the USSR believed that borders must be legally formalized. The positions of the two sides were also different with regard to the question of demarcation lines, because the USSR did not make any distinction between

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external borders of and the line between the two Germanies. He contended that it would be in the interest of peace if the internal line were formalized as a border. Noting that so far neither side had proposed either orally or in writing any modus for such formalization, Mr. Gromyko thought that both sides would have to work out such a modus at a later date. As to sub-paragraph 4 (b), Mr. Gromyko said that a declaration on non-aggression was an acceptable form of obligation from the Soviet standpoint. However, he professed puzzlement in regard to the provision under (ii) and wondered why language causing puzzlement and even apprehension should be included. A non-aggression agreement was a clear commitment involving politico-moral obligations to which nothing should be added that complicated the matter. With respect to sub-paragraph (c), Mr. Gromyko said that the USSR could not accept reference to past statements by the FRG. He noted that this point related to paragraph 8 in the Soviet draft principles. It was quite evident that the two German states must make some kind of statements. Furthermore, in the spirit of fairness, if reference was made to past statements by the FRG, then past statements by the GDR should also be referred to.

Observing that those were the Soviet views on the US working paper, Mr. Gromyko said that he wished to point out that, in developing its own proposals, the USSR had attempted to narrow the gap between the US and the Soviet positions. He regretted that the Soviet action had not met with due response on the part of the US and expressed the hope that the US would pay greater attention to the study of Soviet proposals and would find in them what it had not yet been able to discern. Of course, it was possible that the US had already discerned certain points in the Soviet proposals but was unwilling to speak about them. Mr. Gromyko then claimed that the Soviet basic proposals for a German peace treaty and the solution of the West Berlin situation on the basis of such a treaty, as well as the additional Soviet proposals made here in Geneva in both written and oral form, were designed to facilitate an understanding between the two sides. He said that the main goal was to eliminate the differences between the two sides and to remove the obstacles to agreement between them in Europe, where their interests collided and where dangers existed.

Mr. Gromyko said that he wished to conclude by recalling Mr. Khrushchev's statement in Vienna that Central Europe, West Berlin, and the question of a German peace treaty and of the status of West Berlin on the basis of such a treaty were the only area in the world where the US and the USSR interests were in direct collision. If this problem were settled, that would lead to a radical improvement in the relations between our two states and in the situation in Europe generally. In this connection, he also recalled the Secretary's

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statement in New York that an improvement in the relations between our two states would be of historic significance.

The Secretary responded by saying that he wished to reciprocate the comments Mr. Gromyko had made at the beginning and at the end of his remarks. He stated that the two Governments should try to reach agreement on these problems. Berlin and Germany were undoubtedly the most critical problems and if they were resolved prospects would open for an improvement in the relations between our two states with regard to many other matters. The Secretary felt that it was important that both countries reach agreement on these problems and not let them affect adversely their relations in other areas, including disarmament, where the US was determined to make every effort to reach positive results.

Noting that Mr. Gromyko had touched upon a great number of points, the Secretary said that he would not deal with all of them in detail, but wished to make certain observations on some of them. The Secretary appreciated Mr. Gromyko's detailed comments on the US paper on general principles. However, he wished to emphasize that Mr. Gromyko was not right in saying that our principles took no account of Soviet positions and even represented a backward step as compared to earlier discussions. In fact, discussions between our two sides over the period of the past months had been taking place in a somewhat one-sided manner which was disadvantageous to the US. The USSR had put forward proposals with regard to what it believed to be the right way of drawing a line under World War II. The United States had also had proposals as to how a line under World War II should be drawn, i.e., by unification through free elections, and with Berlin as the capital of a unified Germany. However, we were not putting those proposals forward because that would mean a mere exchange of proposals without agreement. Rather, we had based ourselves on the factual situation. On the other hand, when under these circumstances the Soviet Union said that a line should be drawn under World War II, it clearly had in mind changes which were to a serious disadvantage to the West. The Secretary observed that this brought him to the key point, i.e., the presence of Western forces in West Berlin. He stressed strongly that the US could not accept the view that there was an anomaly in the presence of Western forces in West Berlin; that was no more abnormal than any other aspect of the situation in Germany. Neither could the US accept the view that lines of influence had been drawn in Germany and that Western presence east of those lines was abnormal. Arrangements had been made at the end of World War II, and they provided for Western presence where it existed today. The Secretary recalled the clear and forceful statement by the President in Vienna with

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regard to the great effect on the Western position that would take place if we permitted to be driven out of that area. He observed that he did not say that the USSR intended to drive us out, but noted that the objective effect of the Soviet proposals would be just that. This had also been made clear by the President in Vienna.

The Secretary went on to say that he could not agree that there was ground for fears that West Berlin was a military base. The Western forces in West Berlin were minute in the present military situation. They had minor arms, no nuclear weapons, and insecure communications. No military leader in the East or the West would regard West Berlin as a military base. The troops in West Berlin were there exclusively for political purposes, namely, to stabilize the situation in Germany, and such stabilization worked to the advantage of both the USSR and the US. Mr. Gromyko and his colleagues had stated from time to time that the Soviet proposals concerning Berlin were good for the West. The Secretary said that he wished to tell Mr. Gromyko sincerely that the presence of Western forces in West Berlin was good for both the United States and the USSR. However, neither side should tell the other what was good for it; each of them should decide this for itself and then both should talk to each other on that basis.

Turning to the question of transit, the Secretary noted that Mr. Gromyko had used the phrases "transit as such" and "transit to such a Berlin the status of which was to be agreed upon". He also observed that any proposals on transit must not necessarily be linked to the withdrawal of Western forces from West Berlin. As to the compatibility of free access with the so-called sovereignty of the GDR, the Secretary said this was something both sides had said should be possible, but he was not sure that a common formula had been found for working this problem out. He stated that the expressions "free access" and "exercise of sovereignty" contained the seeds of basic contradiction, unless agreement with respect to free access did not involve the exercise of sovereignty in any manner that would frustrate the agreement. In this connection, the Secretary referred to the first two sentences in paragraph 2 of the Soviet paper on transit and wondered how they could be reconciled. He supposed that both sides would work out a new understanding with regard to access, which would then be subject to agreement by East Germany. The Secretary recalled his remarks that East Germans would of necessity participate in access procedures; however, in a broader sense, the exercise of sovereignty, as far as East Germany was concerned, would consist in agreeing to access. On the other hand, if "sovereignty" meant assumption of control over access in any geographic area, then access would be vulnerable. The United States had

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proposed an international access authority which it believed could overcome this problem. Mr. Gromyko had made a different proposal with regard to such an authority, which would not necessarily overcome that problem. The Soviet proposal assumed disputes and provided for a four-power commission to arbitrate. This, the Secretary noted, also involved the question of whether that commission would act under the unanimity rule. However, the Secretary stated, if transit was not dependent on the withdrawal of Western forces from West Berlin, then he thought that there were some points here which brought the two sides closer together and we could see how to move toward agreement, because he did not believe there was an inherent problem in the matter of reconciling access with the activities of the authorities in East Germany.

Referring to the US paper on principles, the Secretary said he supposed that the general principle under the heading "Berlin" was something both sides had said over the past several months. As to the word "improvement" in sub-paragraph (b), he said there was no basis for suspicion here, because if satisfactory arrangements were found, that would represent improvement; he could not imagine that arrangements agreed upon by both sides would not constitute improvement. As to paragraph 2, the Secretary recalled Mr. Gromyko's comment that it contained a one-sided formulation. However, the Secretary observed, Mr. Gromyko would surely recognize that this was basically what both sides had been saying, and had said more formally in 1955, although the paragraph omitted reference to free elections. The United States agreed that reunification was something for the German people to accomplish; however, he believed that the victorious powers had a residual responsibility for the solution of the German problem. In any event, the language of paragraph 2 was formulated in such a way as to reflect what we believed to be the Soviet position as well.

As to Mr. Gromyko's comments on the question of nuclear diffusion, the Secretary recalled Mr. Gromyko's statement in New York that the two Germanies should not have nuclear weapons and his own statement that this presented no problem because it was our national policy to oppose the proliferation of nuclear weapons to any national government, including the two Germanies. He expressed the view that this problem was something that could be worked out promptly. If there should be any delay because of some difficulties, we could see what could be done, but we preferred the general formula rather than to point at this or that individual state. As to indirect transfer, the Secretary stated we had no intention of giving nuclear weapons to the Bundeswehr or any other national forces, directly or through third parties. He reiterated that the US was opposed to the proliferation of nuclear weapons and said that we had gone to considerable length to safeguard that policy.

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The Secretary

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The Secretary then recalled the President's remark to Mr. Adzhubei to the effect that some questions might be easier to resolve with the passing of time. He said that he wished to note that this did not mean procrastination, because when two sides were in disagreement it was difficult to tell which side was procrastinating in not agreeing with the other. However, many things could happen with time and create a situation where problems would be easier to resolve. For instance, the situation in East Germany had been stabilized in many respects and the flow of refugees had been stopped. Steps could be made in the disarmament field which would create a situation where solution of various problems might be easier. Also, the confrontation in Berlin could be reduced. The Secretary noted that our main problem was that we were dealing here with a dangerous confrontation of interests and particularly with proposals which we believed seriously affected our interests. Both sides should avoid affecting their mutual interests and develop the situation with regard to Berlin on that basis.

The Secretary then observed that Mr. Gromyko had made some twenty-five points and that he had not responded to all of them. He said that he wished to study Mr. Gromyko's remarks against the background of the previous conversations and then report to the President. He expressed the hope that Mr. Gromyko would do the same and said that both sides should see how to move toward agreement on this critical question. Reverting to paragraph 1 of the US draft principles, the Secretary added that reference to "improving the situation in Berlin" related to possible arrangements with regard to traffic, family ties, and other possible improvements affecting both parts of Berlin. He noted that the first part of paragraph 1 referred to West Berlin. The Secretary observed that this wording was not an attempt to conceal an all-Berlin proposal, although the US was prepared to make such a proposal at any moment.

Mr. Gromyko said he wished to comment on some points made by the Secretary. Referring to the Secretary's remark with regard to the link between access and the status of West Berlin, Mr. Gromyko said that there was indeed such a link in the Soviet proposals. He said that transit arrangements would be superimposed on an agreed status of West Berlin and noted that the Soviet proposals with regard to transit did not exist outside such an agreement.

Mr. Gromyko then expressed satisfaction at the Secretary's remark that there were some points of a positive nature in the Soviet paper on access. As to the question of the voting procedure in the proposed four-power commission, Mr. Gromyko stated that this was a subject for later discussion and that he did not wish to commit himself now. However, he believed that the voting procedure should be such as to satisfy all parties and at the same time

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not be in conflict with the sovereignty of the GDR. As to the purpose of the international authority, he viewed that authority as arbiter acting in situations such as those discussed in Geneva in 1959.

Referring to the Secretary's comment on the first two sentences in paragraph 2 of the Soviet paper on transit, Mr. Gromyko said that if there were no contradictions there would be no problem. He contended that such contradictions existed whenever international obligations were assumed: while one party must abide by its obligations the other party must respect its sovereignty. This was nothing new and was not an insoluble problem. In fact, the U.S. itself, through Ambassador Thompson, had referred to international agreements, in particular the Chicago Convention. Mr. Gromyko said he was happy to hear the Secretary say that such arrangements were made on a daily basis. He went on to say that it was inconceivable to imagine a situation where the GDR would take control over access in the face of such obligations as it would have assumed with regard to access arrangements, including international authority. Thus the Secretary's fears were not justified.

As to the duration of an agreement on transit, Mr. Gromyko said that the USSR proceeded on the basis that if there was agreement on the status of West Berlin, civilian transit arrangements would remain in force for the duration of the status.

Turning to the question of nuclear diffusion, Mr. Gromyko said he thought the Secretary apparently understood the difference between the two variants and the Soviet apprehensions in this matter. He reiterated that the Soviet Union did not wish any delay in the development of global arrangements to cause delay in the arrangements with regard to the two German states. He said that every effort should be made to develop global arrangements, but these two questions should not be linked.

As to the President's remark to Mr. Adzhubei, Mr. Gromyko said it was true that time could be an ally, but observed that sometimes it could also be an enemy and could work against the improvement of relations between our two states. The Soviet Government believed that time was ripe for removing the dangers inherent in the West Berlin situation. Therefore, both sides should seek methods of reaching a speedy agreement. However, the USSR was opposed to negotiations for the sake of negotiations; it was in favor of serious negotiations. The USSR had agreed to bilateral exchanges of views and continued to favor ~~such~~ exchanges. It hoped that such exchanges would lead to positive results ~~which~~ would provide a basis for agreement on the question of a German peace treaty.

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The Secretary

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The Secretary inquired what dangers Mr. Gromyko saw in the West Berlin situation and suggested surely it was not the presence of Western forces.

Mr. Gromyko responded by reiterating that the situation in West Berlin was an abnormal one, since it was frozen as it had emerged in the first days after the war. The US might like that situation, but the USSR did not. There were many unsatisfactory aspects to this situation, such as the presence of Western forces in West Berlin, the continuation of the occupation status in West Berlin, disregard for the sovereignty of the GDR, and many other questions still remaining unresolved -- such as frontiers, nuclear weapons, etc.

Perpetuation of this situation was not in the interests of the US either, as least as the USSR saw those interests; nor was it in the interests of peace in Europe. The Soviet Union proceeded on the basis of facts and wanted the present situation to be in line with the actual situation in Germany. Mr. Gromyko asserted that there were few examples in history where for seventeen years after the war there had been no peace treaty and where the situation, such as that in West Berlin, had been preserved in the same form as it had existed three days after the war. He contended that the acuteness of the abnormal situation was compounded by such factors as the existence of nuclear weapons, rockets, etc., which might give rise to accidents. He wondered why one should play with this kind of a situation and why one should not remove these time bombs left over from World War II, so that all nations could breathe freely and live in peace and tranquillity.

The Secretary referred to Mr. Gromyko's remark with regard to the link and said that he had understood ^{from} Mr. Gromyko's statements in earlier conversations that the Soviet proposal for access was specifically related to the withdrawal of Western forces. He observed that the presence of Western forces was considerably different from status and that it was conceivable to reach agreement on a status that would be different from removal of Western forces from West Berlin.

In response to the Secretary's question, Mr. Gromyko drew a diagram indicating three elements: access, status, and troops. He drew lines between access and status and between status and troops, but observed one could also draw a line directly from access to troops. He said that the USSR had given the US its views as to how it understood access in relations to status. Thus access would lead to such West Berlin the status of which had been agreed. As to the Soviet proposal on status, it was well known and it included substitution of Western forces with neutral or UN troops.

The Secretary

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The Secretary observed that Mr. Gromyko's clarification was not very helpful, because it still very much linked access to withdrawal of forces, which was not negotiable. Referring to Mr. Gromyko's remark about tensions, the Secretary said that tensions arise from the fact that the USSR had been asking for something we could not give it. This was the heart of the matter. Furthermore, both sides had commitments concerning Germany and in that respect both of them were interested in the factual situation.

The Secretary reiterated that both sides would like to think about what had been said in Geneva and said he wished to report to the President upon his return to Washington. Referring to Mr. Gromyko's remark with respect to bilateral exchanges, the Secretary said both sides should get in touch after they had carefully reviewed what had been said, because it was in the interest of both sides to do everything they could in order to settle these problems. The Secretary noted that he was not suggesting any particular channel and invited Mr. Gromyko to make suggestions.

Mr. Gromyko said that the channel for bilateral contacts could perhaps be worked out later. He remarked in passing that if the US preferred to use Moscow there would be no objection. In any event, the USSR would wish to know what prospects there were and therefore the question of the form of contact should be considered by both sides in the near future. He said that this stemmed from the USSR's desire to have serious negotiations to seek possibilities for agreement rather than negotiations for the sake of negotiations.

The Secretary replied that the US was also against negotiations for the sake of negotiations and stressed the necessity of seeking solutions. He expressed the hope that he could come to Moscow some time, but said he was not sure if that fitted this situation.

Mr. Gromyko concluded the conversation by saying that the Secretary would be welcome if he found it possible to visit Moscow, including in connection with this problem. However, this was of course something for the Secretary himself to decide. He remarked that the Soviet foreign minister had been to Washington whereas the US Secretary of State had not been to Moscow.

~~SECRET-EYES ONLY~~

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